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AUTHOR McClure, Clarence S.
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ABSTRACT

The development, implementation, and evaluation of a policy to increase student attendance in Albemarle High School, Virginia, is described here. Implemented in 1976, the policy called for mandatory grade reduction for students with large numbers of unexcused absences. The program evaluation revealed that the basic objective of improving student attendance was achieved. The program was continued in 1977 with some modifications. Appendixes contain statistics on attendance, teacher comments on the program, and other materials. (DS)

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Developing and Implementing a Policy for Improving Attendance at the Secondary School Level

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By Clarence S. McClure

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Introductory Practicum Report
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Division Superintendent
Albemarle County Schools
Charlottesville, Virginia

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Developing and Implementing a Policy for

Improving Attendance at the Secondary School Level

By Clarence S. McClure

INTRODUCTION

The Setting

The Albemarle County school system is located in central Virginia and serves a population of approximately fifty thousand people including ten thousand public school students. The geographical area of the county is seven hundred forty square miles containing urban and sub-urban areas, bedroom communities for the City of Charlottesville, which the county surrounds, a major university and rural farm areas. The school system is governed by a very enlightened, open-minded and energetic school board made up of well educated men and women who have a strong dedication to public education.

Until recent years, the county's only high school that enrolls over two thousand students had experienced good student attendance. (See Appendix A.) With the passage of a state law in 1972 called the Standards of Quality[1] that required at least a 90 per cent yearly record of attendance for each school, school officials became concerned and took steps to develop a policy that would help to improve the declining student attendance at Albemarle High School.

Almost identical proposals were made by the high school principal in the 1973-74 and 1974-75 school years in a persistent effort to get administrative and/or school board approval of a policy that would include a penalty of failure for the year when a student missed twenty

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[1]Virginia State Department of Education, Standards of Quality and Objectives for Public Schools in Virginia, 1972-74, A Report Prepared by the State Department of Education, (Richmond: State Board of Education) 5.

days during a school year. After the first rejection the principal found practices in other school systems that he thought justified his second proposal. Neither of the proposals was accepted because of the arbitrary nature of the penalty for which no distinction was made between excused and unexcused absences. (See Appendix B and Appendix C.)

The writer, who is division superintendent in Albemarle County, wrote the State Department of Education about the propriety of such a policy. The response of a state official commended the high school principal on his intention to improve attendance but agreed with the school board that the penalty was too severe and arbitrary. (See Appendix D.)

Although the proposals of the principal were rejected, the school board recognized the problem and the need for a solution. Funds were approved for an aide to assist the principal in making daily parental contacts with parents of absent students and for mailing report cards instead of sending them by students to insure their reaching parents. Visiting teachers' activity was also increased at the secondary level. When these efforts resulted in only a slight recovery in attendance for the 1974-75 school year, the writer decided to pursue the matter of an attendance policy with a grade penalty and resolved to develop a policy that met the principal's objectives and was acceptable to the school board. First responses from the school board were less than encouraging. In the middle of the 1975-76 school year five of the seven members of the school board were replaced, and the new board appeared to be more adamant against the type of attendance policy proposed by the principal than the previous board. School administrators, however, were determined to find an acceptable solution to the problem of attendance, and from this point on the writer worked very closely with

two of the assistant principals to develop a policy and get it approved for implementation at the beginning of the 1976-77 school year.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE POLICY

Need and Rationale

The attendance average at Albemarle High School was around the 95 per cent level from the opening of the school in 1953 until 1968. After that a declining trend began. If one holds that the major reason for absence from school is sickness, there was justification for concern over the attendance record at Albemarle High School. According to health officials of the Charlottesville-Albemarle Health Department a record of 95 per cent attendance is approximately what was expected for the high school age group in 1965, and the incidence of sickness in the Charlottesville-Albemarle area is slightly lower now than it was ten years ago. Further, the State of Virginia has a compulsory attendance law that requires students between the ages of five and seventeen to attend school, and it is the responsibility of school officials to enforce this law. Compulsory attendance has been upheld over the years by the courts, most recently be a Seventh Court of Appeals case, Sheehan v. Scott.[2] So the problem of attendance is one with which school officials must, by law, be concerned. In addition, the State of Virginia requires an attendance average of 90 per cent each year in each high school.

There were other valid concerns about attendance at Albemarle High School that supported the need for regulations to cause students to attend school regularly. If there were no other reasons, the cost to the taxpayers of providing educational opportunities for people who

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[2]Howard M. Johnson, "Compulsory Attendance Laws, Are They Outdated?" Phi Delta Kappan, LV (December, 1973), 226-32.

fail to take advantage of them would justify attempts to improve attendance and thus get better returns on educational dollars spent. There were, however, much more important reasons for the improving students' attendance records. What happens to students who miss unnecessary time from school should be the major concern of educators. In Albemarle County students were missing unnecessary time from school, and there was a pattern of absences on days that extend weekends and holidays. (See Appendix E.) The number of students with excessive absences had reached serious proportions. Some students were missing one-third of the school year. If a school must maintain 90 per cent attendance or have no more than 10 per cent absence rate, a maximum average of eighteen days could be missed by the student in the one hundred eighty day school year. At Albemarle High School two hundred ninety-three students had missed between seventeen and eighty-three days in the first one hundred thirty-two school days of the 1975-76 school year.

The standards of accrediting secondary schools in Virginia require that "each unit of credit for graduation shall include one hundred fifty clock hours of instruction in a secondary school." During a one hundred eighty day school year, a student with fifty-five minute classes receives one hundred sixty-five hours of instruction. A student missing over seventeen class periods would drop below the one hundred fifty hours of instruction stipulated in the accreditation requirements. Granted, there has been no legal interpretation of the accreditation requirements that would prevent a student's receiving credit when less than one hundred fifty hours of instruction are received, but it is obviously a standard considered desirable and an expectation of those who made the regulation unless sickness or other good cause prevents

a student's attendance. About 13 per cent of the students at Albemarle High School attend school less than the time indicated in the 90 per cent requirement of Standards of Quality or the accreditation standard of the state. The most important question, however, still remained. What effect did absences have on students?

Several interesting and important findings indicated a justification for concern about attendance and a need for improved attendance. Among the school dropouts at Albemarle High School during the 1975-76 school year, 87 per cent had absence rates in excess of 20 per cent. All except fifteen of the one hundred fifteen dropouts at Albemarle High School had missed more than 20 per cent of the first one hundred thirty-two days of the 1975-76 school year. Thirteen of the fifteen students had missed between 9 per cent and 17 per cent of the time. Absence was certainly not the only reason for students dropping out of school, but because it is generally a characteristic of those who do drop out one can conclude that reducing absences might also reduce the number of dropouts. Another predictor of dropouts is poor grades, and those who are absent often have poor grades. Over 40 per cent of those who drop out of school have poor grades.[3] Even without supporting data, an experienced educator might reason that those who are absent fall behind, lose interest and are more likely to drop out. (See Appendix F.)

Another important consideration was the relationship between absence and success in school. It is the belief of this writer that the more a student is absent the lower his grades are likely to be. Some students, of course, can miss a considerable amount of time and still pass their work. Many students, however, cannot, and few students can achieve their highest potential unless they are present in class.

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[3]Jerald Bachman, Swayzer Green and Ilona Wirtanen, "Dropping Out is a Symptom," Institute of Social Research, III (September-October, 1971), 169-183.

It is the obligation and should be the goal of professional educators to see that students make the most of their advantages and their abilities. There appeared to be a relationship between attendance and the grades of 800 juniors at Albemarle High School. From the data available one could logically conclude that the more one misses from school the lower his grades are likely to be. At Albemarle High School a definite correlation was found between attendance and grades. (See Appendix G.) This correlation between grades and attendance is discussed on page twenty-three where a comparison of attendance and grades at Albemarle High School during the 1975-76 and 1976-77 school years is made.

Another important concern related to absences was the effect it had on teachers and administrators. The three assistant principals were spending about half of their working hours with attendance problems. The discouraging factor here was not the amount of time spent but the lack of success achieved in improving the attendance of students.

All teachers at Albemarle High School were surveyed on the need for a new attendance policy. There was no doubt that teachers believed that attendance was a problem, and most of them felt that the quality of their teaching was being affected by it. According to teacher responses, a great deal of teacher time was devoted to makeup work. (See Appendix H.)

The need and rationale that supported an attendance policy were practical and pedagogical arguments including those summarized below.

1. Efficiency in using tax dollars in public high schools
2. The Virginia Standards of Quality Legislation requiring a 90 per cent attendance record annually for secondary schools
3. The Virginia Compulsory Attendance Law

4. The fact that absenteeism is a characteristic of dropouts
5. The high correlation between poor attendance and poor grades
6. The concern of teachers and principals about the hours that they were required to devote to attendance problems
7. The support of parents for efforts to improve attendance

Convincing the School Board

Using the rationale mentioned above, the writer and the two assistant principals appeared before the school board in a public work session to report on their findings and to recommend a policy. It may seem repetitious to do so, but since an essential step was to convince the school board to approve the policy, the arguments used with the board are outlined below.

1. Educational literature revealed that attendance was a widespread problem equal to that of descipline and that if it were ignored attendance could be expected to decline.
2. Surveys and discussions with parents, teachers and students indicated that all of them recognized a need for a policy that would reduce absences and supported the type of approach being proposed by the administration.
3. Many other school systems in the state or nation had either adopted an attendance policy with a grade penalty attached or had given up on enforcing compulsory attendance regulations and laws.
4. Information from the health department and a survey of absences on given days of the week gave evidence that a great deal of unnecessary absences occurred in Albemarle County.
5. The State's Standards of Quality and the compulsory attendance law required students to attend school and held local school

officials responsible for seeing that they did so.

6. The State's standards of accreditation were based on an expectation that students would be in school for one hundred fifty clock hours per year for Carnegie Unit credit.
7. Taxpayers were supporting expensive educational services which students should take full advantage of.
8. There was a very definite relationship between the number of absences of a student and the grade he received during the first semester of 1975-76.
9. Although there may be those who oppose the policy, if all parties were represented in its development there would be general acceptance of a fairly and impartially implemented attendance policy.
10. Too much teacher time was being spent with makeup work for students who should not have been absent in the first place, and administrative time devoted to attendance problem was not resulting in improved attendance.

OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

As the writer and the two assistant principals researched the topic, considered the problem as it existed at Albemarle High School and worked with others in the development of a policy, certain objectives evolved. These objectives became the means to an end and potential measurements of success or failure of the policy's implementation and evaluation. These objectives are outlined below.

Involvement and Approval: The first objective was to design a policy with the help of representatives of all parties that would be ultimately affected by it and have it accepted by the school board (which at that time objected to such a policy) in time for implementation with the opening of school in September, 1976.

Implementation: The second objective was to implement the policy with such fairness and impartiality as to avoid any complaints reaching the school board level and to avoid any litigation being initiated on behalf of a student who felt he or she had been unfairly treated.

Improvement of Attendance: The third objective was to increase the percent of attendance for the first eight months of school in 1976-77 by 1½ percentage points, thus increasing the percent of attendance from the 1975-76 level of 91.48% to 92.98% for Albemarle High School.

Reduction of Dropouts: The fourth objective was to reduce the dropout rate for the two thousand one hundred students at Albemarle High School from the 1975-76 figure of 5.47% to 4.76% for 1976-77.

Reduction of Absence for Certain Students: The fifth objective was to reduce the average number of absences for students with grades ranging from D to C+ by 10 per cent.

Reduction of Teacher Makeup Time: The sixth objective was to reduce the number of hours spent by teachers in makeup work by 10 per cent.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE POLICY

A Study of Existing Practices

In spite of the school board's initial reaction, the administrators felt that the board could be convinced by comprehensive and well prepared data that an attendance policy similar to the one proposed was needed. A search of the professional literature was conducted by the administration, and a number of practices were discovered in other school systems around the country that served as models for the development of an attendance policy for Albemarle County.

There are a number of school systems around the country that have attendance policies that penalize students by reducing their grades for excessive absences. In Lake Oswego, Oregon the policy is that a truant gets a zero for all classes missed and students are given a one-day suspension for the second day of truancy, a three-day suspension for the third day of truancy and a hearing with possible expulsion for the fourth day of truancy. Absenteeism has dropped from 11 per cent to 5 per cent since this policy was adopted three years ago. In Cody, Wyoming students fail after the third unexcused absence. In fact they are dropped from school for the remainder of the semester. In other school systems such as Boulder Colorado the school system has discontinued requiring attendance and now leaves it to the student and his parents to decide upon attending or not attending school.[4]

Other practices were discovered through personal correspondence between the principal of Albemarle High School and other principals around the State of Virginia. In Chesterfield County students who have twelve unexcused absences in a single semester fail for the semester.[5] This type of policy seemed to fit the need in Albemarle County best, and the administration went to work to develop its own version of such a policy. Using the Chesterfield plan as a guide, the following features were included in a working paper for use with a committee in the development of an attendance policy for Albemarle County.

1. There would be a limit of six unexcused absences per nine-week period, after which a student's grade would be reduced to seventy-four if he were passing. Those who were not passing would be counseled and if this failed, punishment such as

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[4]National Association of Secondary School Principals. "A Report on Student Attendance and Absenteeism," The Practitioner, I (March, 1975), 1-12.

[5]Statement by Edward T. Jones, Chesterfield County, Virginia, High School, Letter.

detention hall or even suspension would be used. Some students would be referred to Juvenile Court.

2. There would be a clear definition of excused and unexcused absences.
3. There would be a system of notifying parents about their children's absences that would include as many contacts as possible. When a student was absent for the fourth time, there would be a mandatory contact with parents by a school administrator.
4. There would a special effort to inform parents and students before the policy was put into effect.
5. There would be an appeal for students penalized including a conference with the parents of any student who felt he had been unfairly treated. The three assistant principals would serve as an appeal committee. A complaint not settled at this level would go to the superintendent for arbitration.
6. There would be involvement by all parties who might be affected by the policy in its development.

Professional literature revealed that, while there is a short supply of research on attendance, there is widespread concern around the country over secondary school attendance. A study by the National Association of Secondary Principals rated poor attendance as their "most perplexing student problem" by a ratio of two to one over discipline.[6] While parents, school personnel and school board members have been very much aware of concern about discipline, which the Gallup Polls annually refer to as "the number one citizen criticism of

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[6]National Association of Secondary School Principals, op. cit., 3.

public schools,"[7] secondary school administrators were plagued daily with the equally frustrating problem with attendance.

Involvement of Parents, Teachers, Students, etc.

A committee was formed by the writer in the spring of 1976 with the knowledge and consent of the school board to study the attendance situation and make recommendations to the school board. The committee's membership is outlined below. (See Appendix I.)

Two assistant principals at the high school

One junior high school principal

Two parents (one of whom had a student who had problems with attendance)

Two high school students (one of whom was president of the student government)

Two high school teachers

Two school board members

The Division Superintendent

The committee met for three sessions of approximately three hours each and discussed the various features that were included in the working paper. The committee endorsed the concepts without changing the nature of the attendance policy envisioned by the administration.

In the meantime others were involved in the planning process. The matter was discussed by the student government board, and this body acknowledged the fact that an attendance problem existed and that a policy such as this was needed. The parents of the 800 juniors at the high school were sent survey forms but only twenty-five were returned. These responses were four to one in favor of the attendance policy. A

[7]George Gallup, "The Public Looks at the Public Schools," Today's Education, LXIV (September-October, 1975), 16-20.

telephone survey increased parental responses to two hundred forty-seven of which one hundred ninety favored the policy and fifty-seven opposed it. (See Appendix J.) The one hundred forty teachers at Albemarle High School were surveyed, and one hundred ten of them responded. All except three of those responding acknowledged the attendance problem and favored a policy such as the one being proposed. Space for teacher comment was included in the survey form and many comments were made supporting the attendance policy and making suggestions about such topics as what absences should be excused, problems with makeup work, etc. (See Appendix H.)

Many good ideas came from parents, teachers and students that were helpful in developing a policy that would be accepted by those affected by it. The administrators decided that the same opportunities for involvement would be repeated after the first year of implementation of the attendance policy.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

Informing Parents and Students

In July, 1976 the need for such a policy was fully discussed at the monthly school board meeting. The school board approved the policy and directed the administration to use every possible means to see that all parents and students of Albemarle High School knew the provisions of the policy before it took effect.

The provisions of the policy approved by the school board are outlined below.

1. A student who has six or more unexcused absences during any nine-week grading period will have his grade reduced to seventy-four for that grading period if he is passing. If

he is failing, the actual grade will be recorded.

2. An absence resulting from a school sponsored activity will not count in the total because scheduling necessities will require one educational activity to occasionally displace another. Prearranged absences will be left up to the discretion of the principal. All other absences except those for personal sickness or sickness or death in the family will count.
3. A student absent from class four class periods during a nine-week grading period will be warned in a conference with his assistant principal, a letter will be mailed to his parents, a phone call will be made to parents, if possible, and a parental conference will be held if parents desire. If a student is absent two more class periods, he will be assigned a failing grade in the class unless the Review Committee decides otherwise or a subsequent appeal overrules the committee. The assistant principal will give written notice to the student, his parents and the teacher of the final decision.
4. A student may appeal loss of credit in a class to the Review Committee consisting of the three assistant principals. A student facing loss of credit in one or more classes may request a meeting with the Review Committee by contacting his grade level assistant principal. The meeting will be scheduled the following day at 3:45 p.m., or as soon as convenient to all parties. At the meeting, the student and his parents will be encouraged to present any and all evidence supporting a claim of extenuating circumstances causing the absences. The student may appeal the decision of the Review Committee to the principal, to the superintendent

and then to the school board.

5. It should be understood that only unexcused absences shall be counted in assessing a grade penalty because of absences from school. This point was emphasized at every opportunity.

The local media thoroughly covered the discussions at the school board meetings, and additional announcements were made by the newspaper and two radio stations just prior to the opening of school. A few days before school opened for the year, a newsletter was mailed to the home of each high school student explaining the new attendance policy. For the first five days of school announcements were made over the P.A. system each day. Also, during the first week each student was given a handbook which included the attendance policy. (See Appendix K.)

Administrative Leeway

Since the policy was considered to be a drastic step by the school board, it was approved on a trial basis and the superintendent was given the authority to arbitrate any disputes that arose between students, parents and high school administrators. The superintendent was authorized to make exceptions if such became necessary because of unforeseen circumstances, but he was to be held responsible for the fair implementation of the policy. The superintendent set up a committee to be used in hearing complaints that reached his level, but this committee was never used.

Effects of the Policy

The effects of the policy will be discussed in more specific terms as the evaluation of the overall effort is reported below. It suffices to say here that over one hundred eighty penalties were assessed against students during the first three quarters of the 1976-77 school year and the percentage of attendance at the high school increased. The adminis-

trators at the high school believe that discipline was better in the school than it has been for the past several years, but it would be difficult if not impossible to attribute this to the attendance policy.

EVALUATION OF THE POLICY

The evaluation of the development and implementation of the attendance policy below is related specifically to the objectives which were set before this project began. Although some may be looked upon as process objectives and others product objectives, all six objectives were important or even essential to the success of the effort.

Involvement and Approval

The first objective was to involve those who were to be affected by the policy in its implementation and to convince the school board that it should be approved for the 1976-77 school year. As has already been pointed out, parents, teachers, students, administrators and school board members were involved in the development of the policy, and this led to their acceptance and support for it. This acceptance and support added to the policy's potential for successful implementation and in gaining school board approval. The school board did approve of the attendance policy on only a one year basis at first, but this approval was later extended indefinitely with some modifications in the policy. These will be mentioned later in this report. The first objective, then, was achieved.

Fair and Impartial Implementation

The second objective was to implement the attendance policy with such fairness and impartiality as to avoid having parental or student complaints brought to the school board level or having litigation initiated on behalf of a student who felt that he or she had been un-

fairly treated. The administration was given the flexibility to consider special circumstances and make exceptions, but no exceptions were made by the superintendent and no complaints reached either the superintendent's office or the school board. Five parents did telephone the superintendent during the school year, but the purpose of the calls was clarification of the policy. These were not parents whose children were penalized, but they were those who wanted to be certain that they understood the policy correctly so as to avoid penalties. No litigation or threats of litigation were made to the administration or school board. Some misunderstandings about excused or unexcused absences arose and were dealt with satisfactorily by the assistant principals at the high school who served as an appeals committee. The definitions of excused and unexcused absences were clear, but on a few occasions these were either misinterpreted or erroneously recorded by teachers. Every appeal, however, was resolved at the school level.

An attempt was made to determine student opinion of the policy and its implementation. In April, 1977, every thirtieth junior of the eight hundred listed on the tenth-day enrollment sheet was asked to rate on a scale of one to ten (most favorable) the following two questions.

1. How would you rate the need for an attendance policy such as the one used for 1976-77?
2. How would you rate the manner in which this policy was carried out by your principal and assistant principals?

The average response of these twenty-five students ranked the first question at seven and the second question at five. This mediocre rating is probably due to the fact that some respondents had been affected by the policy. Another explanation might be the initial confusion over

excused and unexcused absences. The students were also asked to make any comment, critical or favorable, about the policy or its implementation. There were only a few comments. One of these related to the possibility of students interpreting the policy as a free cut system in which some would feel that they should take off six days whether they needed them or not. Another student questioned the acceptance of excuses for athletes who were absent to play in sports events and students who went away with their parents on business trips or vacations. Several students stated that teachers were not reporting absences accurately in some cases. The student government, in spite of these objectives, endorsed the continuation of the policy for 1977-78.

Although it was necessary to make some improvements in reporting and approving absences before approval of the school board could be obtained for the policy for the 1977-78 school year, the second objective was achieved for the first year of the attendance policy.

Improvement of Attendance

The third objective was the basic product objective. The whole effort was centered around improving the school's record of attendance by 1½ percentage points from 91.48 per cent to 92.98 per cent. This objective was exceeded by almost one percentage point. The percentage of attendance for Albemarle High School through March of 1977 was 93.92 per cent. (See Appendix L.) The writer is encouraged by the fact that the number of students who missed a large number of days was substantially reduced in 1976-77. For example, the number of students who missed more than forty days in 1975-76 was over fifty but only seventeen in 1976-77. (See Appendix M.)

Even though the objective was exceeded, one can easily see that there are still too many unnecessary student absences from high school.

Some students apparently did look upon the six-day limit as free cut days and used them on Mondays and Fridays. Although there were fewer absences on these days in 1976-77 than in the previous year, excess absences still occurred on Mondays and Fridays. (See Appendix E.) Since parents often take students out of school to prolong weekends and holidays for their families, there may be no reasonable remedy. If the problem increases, however, it may be necessary to weight absences on certain days to discourage those occurring on Mondays and Fridays and before and after holidays.

Another discouraging finding was that there was an almost identical pattern for the two years in a progressively declining attendance rate during the semester. Each year started with good attendance, but in November and December the lowest point for the semester was reached. In the second semester, attendance started at a slightly lower level than it had been in October and reached its lowest point by the end of the school year. (See Appendix L.) This would lead one to again conclude that, although the objective was met for purposes of the first year's effort, there are still too many unnecessary absences occurring.

Reduction of Dropouts

The fourth objective was to reduce the dropout rate of Albemarle High School from 5.47% to 4.76%. Originally, the school administration felt that, since poor attendance had been and still is a characteristic of dropouts at this school, an improvement in attendance would result in an improvement of the dropout rate. This idea was based in part on a local social service survey conducted in the central Virginia area during the summer of 1976 that indicated that many able students dropped out of school after missing a great deal of time and getting hopelessly behind in school work. After considerable discussion of this objective

by the administrators involved with this project, it was concluded that this was an unrealistic objective. This conclusion was reached before the policy was approved and was based on the belief that the policy might, in fact, induce potential dropouts to leave school earlier. It was also based on the fact that the adoption of the attendance policy was introducing nothing into the school that could be expected to motivate the potential dropout to increase his attendance. The threat of failure to potential dropouts, many of whom were already failing, was not a logical or realistic motivator. Expectations for meeting this objective were uncertain at best.

In spite of this pessimism, the dropout rate did improve slightly. With one hundred more students enrolled in 1976-77 than in the previous year, there were seven fewer dropouts. Although the dropout rate was only reduced to approximately 4.95% and a high rate of absenteeism is still a characteristic of dropouts, potential dropouts were apparently not induced to leave by the attendance policy as was feared. There was progress toward this particular objective, but it was not met. (See Appendix N.)

Reduction of Absences for Certain Students

The fifth objective was to reduce the number of absences of those students who were passing at a D to C+ level. It was hoped that many of these students were already motivated to pass and had the ability to do better if their attendance were good. In any case, it was expected that the number of absences of these particular students would be reduced by 10 per cent.

In the 1975-76 survey of grades and absences, the average number of absences for juniors at Albemarle High School who were making grades of D to C+ was 9.6 days. (See Appendix G.) This average dropped to

8.9 days for the 1976-77 school year. (See Appendix O.) Although this reduction in absences for these students falls short of the 10 per cent objective, it is not far short and represents significant progress toward what was perhaps a very ambitious or even an unrealistic goal.

One factor that motivated Albemarle administrators to implement the attendance policy was the belief that attendance affects grades. While individual students were not identified as originally planned, information collected generally supports this belief. (See Appendix G and Appendix O.) Average student absences for students doing average to superior work are compared below for the first year of the attendance policy and for the previous year.

Grades Compared with Average Number of Absences

Average Student Grades	1975-76 Absences	1976-77 Absences
C to C+ (2.0 - 2.4)	3.7	2.9
C+ to B (2.5 - 2.9)	2.8	2.2
B to B+ (3.0 - 3.4)	2.6	2.8
B+ to A (3.5 - 3.9)	2.2	1.0
A (4.0)	1.0	1.0

One can see from these figures that there was an improvement in the attendance of C to A students in the 1976-77 school year. A study of the data in the two appendices cited also shows that the better a student's grades are the better his attendance is likely to be. It was not the purpose of this project to definitely prove whether better attendance results in better grades or whether students with good grades naturally miss fewer days. The purpose here was to show that there is a definite relationship between grades and attendance and that this should be an incentive to educators and parents to support efforts to

improve student attendance in high school.

Reduction of Teacher Makeup Time

Lack of success in achieving the final objective is perhaps the greatest disappointment of the project. The objective was to reduce by 10 per cent the amount of time spent by teachers in providing opportunities for students to make up work missed because of absences. There was no reduction. In fact, teachers claimed that they spent more time with makeup work than they did the previous year, in spite of the reduction in student absences. A comparison of teacher responses in the surveys conducted each of the two years reveals that those teachers who spent between one and two hours per week with makeup work increased from 36.7 per cent to 58.3 per cent for 1976-77. The surveys also showed that 16.3 per cent of the teachers spent less than one hour per week in 1975-76 and no teacher spent less than one hour per week in 1976-77. (See Appendix P.) The writer has no explanation for these changes. There was no change in requirements or expectations for teachers in performing makeup work that he or any administrators at the school knows of. Perhaps the adoption of a policy, the discussion of its effects and the conducting of the surveys made teachers more cognizant or resentful of the work they were required to do because of absences. In any case the objective was not met.

In spite of these responses by teachers, over 80 per cent of the teachers surveyed felt that the high school was justified in its efforts to improve attendance and should continue the policy. In the same survey teachers made suggestions for changes which were considered along with others for improving the policy for the 1977-78 school year. These changes are described later in this paper.

ATTENDANCE POLICY, 1977-78

For the 1977-78 school year approval has been given by the Albemarle County School Board to continue the attendance policy with certain modifications. These changes have been suggested by teachers, school board members and members of the original committee that assisted with the development of the policy adopted. This committee met to review the recommendations of the administration and gave its endorsement of the proposed changes before the school board approved the policy in June of 1977. The summary below outlines the modifications that the administration recommended and the school board approved for the 1977-78 school year. These changes were recommended by the assistant principals at the high school after considering the comments and recommendations of teachers, students, parents and administrators. (See Appendix Q.) The changes in the policy for 1977-78 are outlined below.

1. The limit of six unexcused absences will be reduced to five.
2. A form letter used to warn parents before a penalty is to be assessed will be reworded to clarify the policy and the reason for the letter.
3. A system of volunteers will be set up in an effort to have the manpower to telephone the parent of every absentee each day.
4. The system of reporting absences to the principal's office will be clarified for teachers and more strictly enforced by administrators to insure equitable application of the policy.
5. The definition of excused absences and rules for verifying reasons for absences will be very strictly adhered to including the requirement of doctors verification for absences of more

than five days.

CONCLUSION

Cost in Time and Money

A great deal of time and effort was devoted to the development and impelementation of an effective attendance policy for Albemarle High School. The writer spent more than thirty hours in development, twenty-five hours in implementation and approximately forty hours in writing this report. Committee members, school board members, student government officers, consultants and teachers devoted over two hundred forty man-hours in their various roles in this project. The assistant principals spent no less than fifty hours in planning, surveying and evaluating the various phases of the effort. This does not count the many hours spent in the implementation of the policy. Without the dedication of these two individuals the attendance policy could not have been successful.

The cost involved in the development and implementation of the attendance policy was very low in terms of added costs. That is, no funds were added to the budget or spent from the budget that would not have been spent anyway. If one attached a cost to the man-hours spent in this effort, the resulting price tag would have been rather high. The writer believes the cost can be justified.

The Value of the Effort

The attendance policy described in this paper evolved from the concerns of local school administrators about the problems arising in Albemarle High School as a result of poor and declining attendance. These concerns were reflected in the objectives set for the development and implementation of the policy and related to students and teachers

as well as the effectiveness of the school system in providing the educational services which the citizens expected and were paying for. With the exception of the objective which related to reducing teacher time spent in makeup work for absent students, the stated objectives were either met or significant progress was made toward meeting them. The basic objective of increasing the percentage of attendance at the school for the 1976-77 school year was exceeded.

The writer considers the effort a success and believes that a significant contribution was made at Albemarle High School. For the 1977-78 school year the policy as amended will also be used in the county's second high school which will open its doors for the first time in September. (See Appendix R.)

The writer, who serves as chairman of the Central Virginia Superintendents Study Group made-up of some twenty-seven superinendents, will distribute this report to all division superintendents in his area of the state and make an oral report on it with the hope and belief that other school systems will be able to benefit from the experience of the Albemarle school system in dealing with their attendance problems at the secondary level.

Reports by the news media have already resulted in inquiries from other Virginia educators. The Albemarle attendance policy is not expected to suit the specific needs or expectations of all school divisions, but it can serve as a model for planning a policy that can result in the improvement of attendance at the secondary school level.

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GLOSSARY

Carniegie Unit	The term used to describe an educational unit of credit which carries with it certain requirements regarding such matters as the time devoted to a course, the certification of teachers of the course, etc. The Carniegie units are used by high schools to guarantee some standardization of course requirements for the benefit of college admissions screening.
Compulsory Attendance Law	A state law requiring that all students remain in school until they reach a certain age, usually sixteen years.
Dropout	A student who permanently leaves secondary school prior to receiving a high school diploma.
Excused Absence	An absence from a class or for the full school day for which an acceptable reason is given by the parent of the absent student.
Makeup Work	Work missed by students who are absent from regularly scheduled classes for which teachers provide opportunities for the absent students to do individually or in small groups usually done before or after school or during the teachers' free period.
Policy	In the Albemarle County school system a policy is a rule approved by the school board. In this paper, however, the terms policy and regulation are used synonymously.
Regulation	A regulation in the Albemarle County school system is either a rule of the superintendent or a rule of the principal which applies to his particular school and complies in principle with a policy.
Unexcused Absence	An absence from a class or for the full school day for which an acceptable reason is not given by the parent of the absent student.
Visiting Teacher	An employee of the school system whose responsibility was to enforce attendance and assist families with problems that might prevent students from attending school.

31

Appendix A

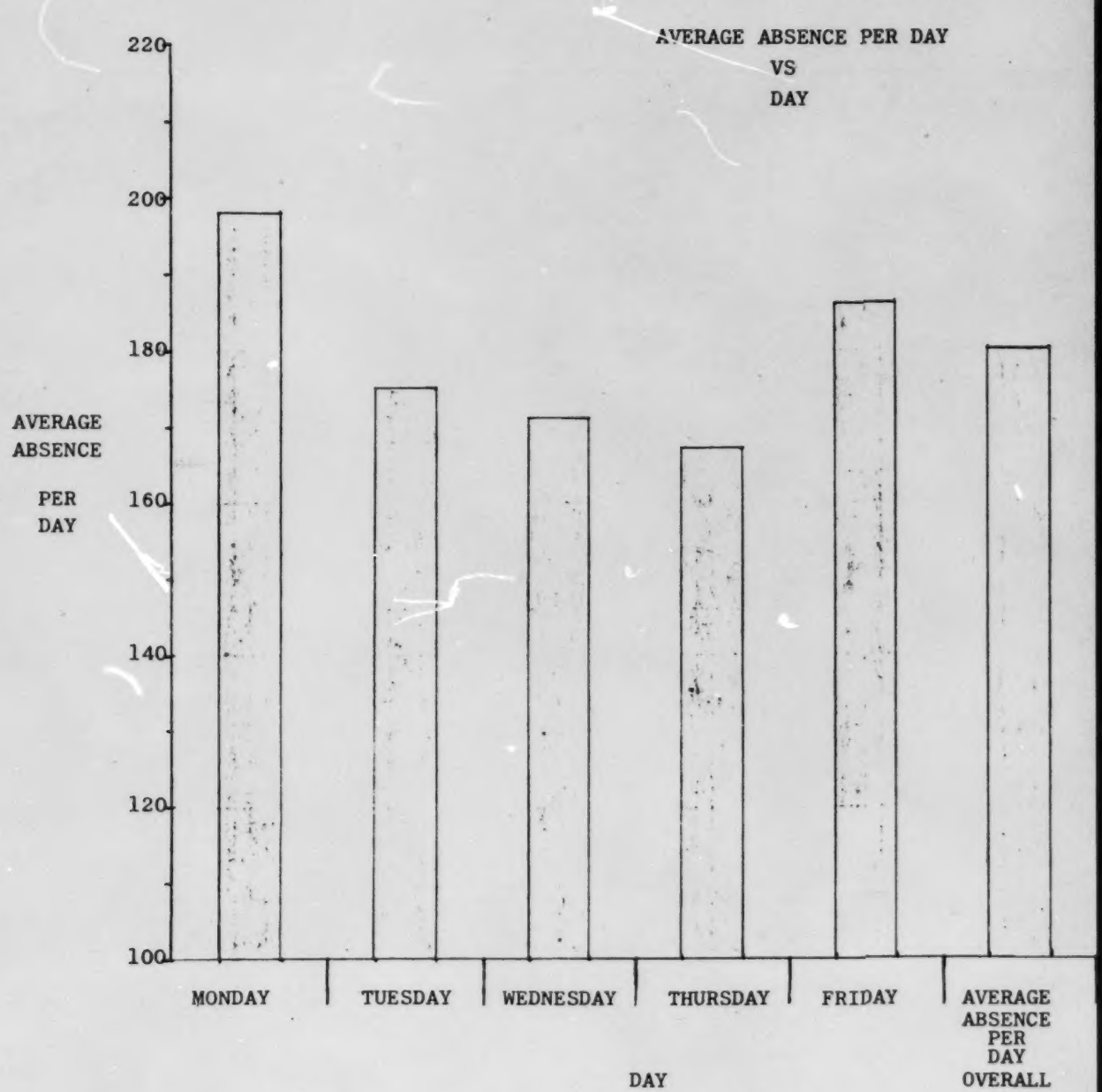
A

PERCENT OF ATTENDANCE FOR ALBEMARLE HIGH SCHOOL
FOR THE LAST SIXTEEN YEARS

Year	Percent of Attendance
*1975-76	91.48
1974-75	92.01
1973-74	91.01
1972-73	90.91
1971-72	91.19
1970-71	91.34
1969-70	93.09
1968-69	93.01
1967-68	93.62
1966-67	95.02
1965-66	94.80
1964-65	95.08
1963-64	94.66
1962-63	94.18
1961-62	94.87
1960-61	94.07

*As of the end of April, 1976

Appendix A Continued



Appendix C

C

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ATTENDANCE REGULATIONS FOR ALBEMARLE HIGH SCHOOL

The purpose of the information and recommendations presented here is to help the Albemarle County School Board understand the problem of student absenteeism from school and to assist the School Board in implementing policies that will lead to improved student attendance.

The Standards of Quality and Objectives for Public Schools in Virginia, 1972-74 require quote "the percentage of attendance of pupils shall not fall below the average of the last three years or ninety percent of school membership".[1] During the 1973-74 and 1974-75 school years, the average daily attendance at Albemarle High School has fluctuated at approximately ninety percent. Obviously Albemarle High School is barely meeting this standard and may not continue to do so in the future. Research indicates that student absence from school is increasing throughout the nation.[2] Schools showing an improvement in attendance are those that have taken positive action through strong policies regarding attendance.[3]

Efforts by the school administration and guidance department are being made and have been made in the past to encourage student attendance. Measures taken include the following: (1) The parents of each absent student are telephoned as frequently as time permits; (2) Conferences are held with students frequently absent by both the administrators and guidance counselors; (3) Parents of all students are notified by nine week reports of student absences; (4) Individual letters are written to parents of students excessively absent; (5) Referrals of chronically absent students are made to the visiting teacher for investigation. In addition, the curriculum offered at Albemarle High School is very comprehensive and offers more than adequate educational opportunity to meet the various needs of each student.

In terms of the individual classroom teacher, student absences present a never ending source of extra work. If the average number of students taught per day by each teacher is 100, then for a given week of 5 days, 500 periods of instruction occur. 10 % student absence causes 50 periods of lost instruction per week which may have to be made up individually.

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[1] Standards of Quality and Objectives for Public Schools in Virginia, 1972-74, enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia, 1972, page 5, item 9.

[2] The Practioner, National Association of Secondary School Principals, March, 1975, page 5.

[3] Ibid.

Excessive student absence from school has become a serious concern of parents, educators and business. Not only is the absent student missing a significant amount of educational experiences, he must be present to be taught, but he is also failing to acquire the habits of punctuality and dependability necessary for success in his future endeavors be it work or further education.

The school has the moral obligation to teach this sense of responsibility to its students. To accomplish this goal, more of the responsibility for attending school regularly must be placed directly on the student. Therefore, we recommend the adoption of the following attendance policy for grades 9 - 12 in Albemarle County Schools based on the statement below:

> "The standards for accrediting secondary schools in Virginia states quote, "the unit of credit shall be the measure of time for the quantitative element in high school instruction and represent satisfactory completion of a designated course based on a minimum time allocated of 150 clock hours. Each unit of credit for graduation shall include 150 clock hours of instruction in a secondary school."[4]

Assuming that the school year is exactly 180 days long and that each class period is 55 minutes in length, then a student at Albemarle High School receives 165 hours of instruction during the course of a school year.[5] If a student is absent from a class more than 17 times[6] then he has dropped below the state standard for a unit of credit. There is another way of calculating this.

As mentioned before, the Standards of Quality and Objectives for Public Schools in Virginia require "the percentage of attendance for pupils shall not fall below the average of the last three years or ninety percent of school membership." If a school must maintain 90% of membership as average daily attendance then clearly the requirement should be that all students attend school at least 90% of the time or have no more than 10% absence for a year. 10% of a 180 day school year is 18 days.

Thus, two entirely different types of calculation concerning the total amount of absence that should be allowed have produced almost exactly the same results. The attendance requirement should allow no more than 18 days absent during a given school year or perhaps 20 days absent in an effort to be absolutely fair with such a requirement.

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[4]Standards for Accrediting Secondary Schools in Virginia, July 1, 1974, State Department of Secondary Education, Standard C, page 7.

[5]$180 \text{ days} \times 55 \frac{\text{minutes}}{\text{day}} \times \frac{1 \text{ hour}}{60 \text{ min}} = 165 \text{ hours.}$

[6]17 55 periods would equal to greater than 15 hours absence.

D

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
RICHMOND, 23216

September 4, 1975

Mr. Clarence S. McClure, Superintendent
Albemarle County Schools
County Office Building
Charlottesville, Virginia 22901

Dear Mr. McClure:

In reply to your letter of August 1 concerning improved attendance at Albemarle High School, I would like to commend the principal and assistant principal of Albemarle High School for giving serious consideration to a problem that has been identified in their school as one needing a significant amount of attention.

It is my opinion that the process described of warning letters to the parents and a mandatory conference with parents is a positive step in the direction of trying to solve attendance problems. A committee composed of the assistant principal, guidance counselor, teacher, and a randomly selected student to discuss the implications of too many absences is also a good technique for bringing to the student's attention the seriousness of his absence. However, the arbitrary maximum of 20 may present some serious problems in its administration.

It would appear that while you may solve the SOQ objective dealing with percentage of youngsters in attendance, you may create a new problem with the performance objective dealing with high school graduates expressed as a percent of first grade enrollment. The 20 class periods missed creating no credit is going to increase the number of youngsters who may fail courses. These youngsters will have very little incentive for remaining in school the rest of the year and may present some problems as far as compulsory attendance and discipline is concerned.

Mr. Clarence S. McClure
Page 2
September 4, 1975

I think action on the part of school principals to improve attendance is commendable and I would have to extend my congratulations to your staff in working on this problem. There are no legal implications as far as the 20 day rule is concerned, it is a local decision.

Although I agree with your principals that a strong policy with supporting procedure is important to the successful treatment of the problem, I do share with you some reservations concerning the 20 day rule. In administration there are sure to be exceptions and problems.

Thank you for your inquiry.

Yours truly,

Carl L. Riehm
Assistant Superintendent
for Instruction

CLR:cp

cc: Mr. Numa P. Bradner
Mr. James H. Stiltner

August 1, 1975

Dr. Carl L. Riehm
Assistant Superintendent for Instruction
State Department of Education
Richmond, Virginia

Dear Dr. Riehm:

In an effort to improve attendance at Albemarle High School the principal and the assistant principal there have made recommendations which would include a stipulation that a student absent from a class more than 20 class periods a year would not receive credit for that class. I would appreciate your studying the attached recommendations from the administrators of Albemarle High School and giving me your reaction to them.

Although I have discussed this with our attorney and he believes that the School Board has the legal right to make such a policy, I have serious reservations, and I would appreciate some direction from the State Department of Education on the matter.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Clarence S. McClure
Division Superintendent

CSM:mbm

Enclosure

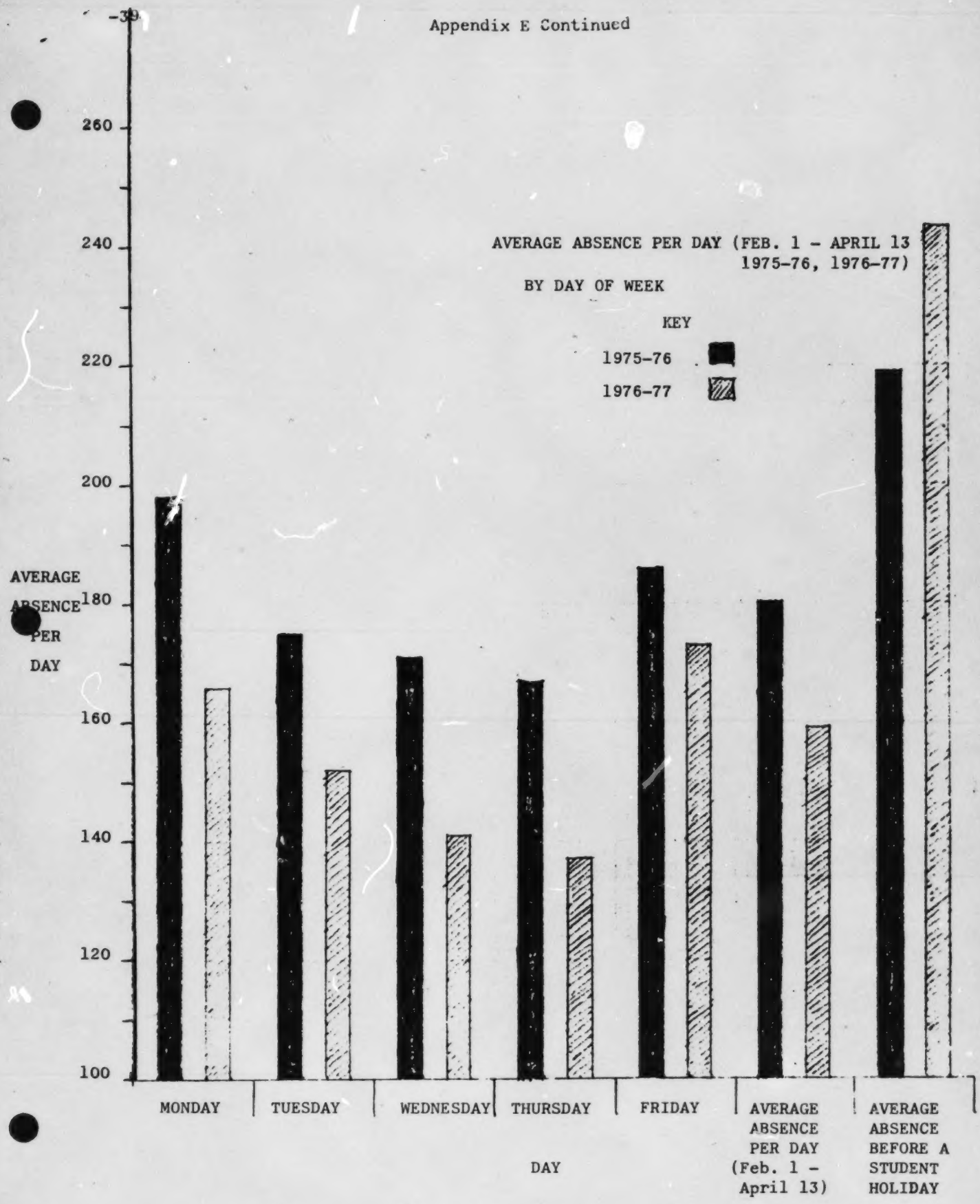
Appendix E

Absences by the Day and Before Holiday

Attendance records for February 1 through April 13 indicate the following pattern of absence.

Day of Week	Average No. of Students Absent Per Day	
	1975-76	1976-77
Monday	198	166
Tuesday	175	152
Wednesday	171	141
Thursday	167	137
Friday	186	173
Average absence per day overall	180	159
Average absence the day before a student holiday	219	243

Last year's pattern of more absences at the beginning and end of each week, as well as before holidays, continues this year. Quoting last year's report, "the possibility of illness or other problems which are acceptable reasons for school absence occuring more frequently on Monday, Friday and before holiday is unlikely." Although attendance has improved, the conclusion here can only be that needless absences from school have continued through the 1976-77 school year.


AVERAGE ABSENCE PER DAY (FEB. 1 - APRIL 13 1975-76, 1976-77)
BY DAY OF WEEK
KEY
1975-76
1976-77
AVERAGE ABSENCE PER DAY
260
240
220
200
180
160
140
120
100
MONDAY
TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY
THURSDAY
FRIDAY
AVERAGE ABSENCE PER DAY (Feb. 1 - April 13)
AVERAGE ABSENCE BEFORE A STUDENT HOLIDAY
DAY

Appendix F

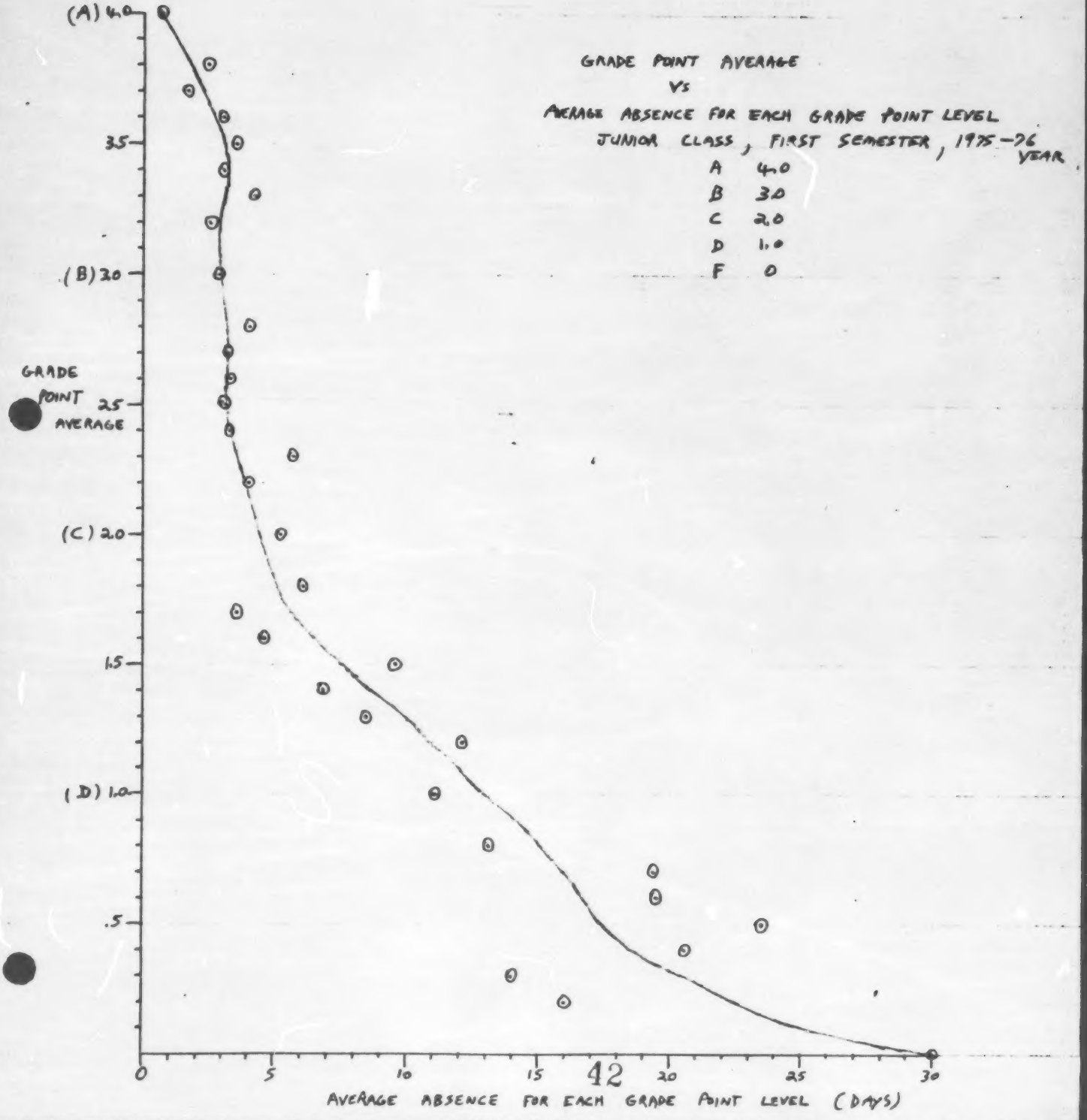
REPORT ON DROPOUT ABSENTFEISM
1975-76

The data below covering the period September 1 through April 30, 1976 was obtained from the computer attendance recor of Albemarle High School.

Examination of number of students (dropouts) versus percentage of time absent clearly indicates one common characteristic of students who have quit school this year. Of the 115 students that have dropped out, all but 15 have had an absence rate in excess of 20%. A student absent 20% of the time is absent at least one day per week. Poor attendance appears to be a contributing factor that may lead a student to quit school.

NUMBER OF DROPOUTS	PERCENTAGE ABSENTS	NUMBER OF DROPOUTS	PERCENTAGE ABSENTS	NUMBER OF DROPOUTS	PERCENTAGE ABSENTS
1	3	5	31	1	49
1	6	1	32	1	52
1	10	5	33	2	53
2	11	3	34	2	54
3	13	4	36	1	55
1	14	1	37	2	56
1	15	4	38	2	57
2	16	2	39	3	59
3	17	3	40	1	61
3	22	3	41	2	64
1	23	2	42	1	67
4	24	1	43	3	72
4	26	3	44	1	76
4	27	2	45	1	77
3	28	2	46	1	80
1	29	7	47	1	85
2	30	3	48	1	42
				1	96

Appendix F Continued



Appendix G

ATTENDANCE AND GRADES

What relationship exists between a student's attendance in class and his performance as indicated by his grade in the class? An investigation of the first semester grades and attendance of the junior class during the 1975-76 school year indicates a definite correlation between attendance and grades.

Each junior's first semester grades were converted to a single grade point average by assigning points to his semester letter grade for each subject and then finding the average. The grade point values assigned were: A-4; B-3; C-2; D-1; and F-0. After finding the grade point average for each junior, the average absence for each grade point level was computed. The results are indicated in the table and graph below.

GRADE POINT LEVEL	AVERAGE ABSENCE (DAYS)	GRADE POINT LEVEL	AVERAGE ABSENCE (DAYS)	GRADE POINT LEVEL	AVERAGE ABSENCE (DAYS)
0	30	1.5	9.6	3.0	2.9
.1	*___	1.6	4.6	3.1	___
.2	16	1.7	3.6	3.2	2.6
.3	14	1.8	6.2	3.3	4.3
.4	20.6	1.9	___	3.4	3.1
.5	23.5	2.0	5.3	3.5	3.6
.6	19.5	2.1	___	3.6	3.1
.7	19.4	2.2	4.1	3.7	1.7
.8	13.2	2.3	5.8	3.8	2.5
.9	___	2.4	3.4	3.9	___
1.0	11.1	2.5	3.2	4.0	.8
1.1	___	2.6	3.4		
1.2	12.2	2.7	3.3		
1.3	8.5	2.8	4.1		
1.4	6.9	2.9	___		

*No juniors with this average

Appendix H

ALBEMARLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ATTENDANCE

FACULTY SURVEY

On Monday, April 12, 1976, the following questionnaire was given to the faculty during the afternoon teacher's meeting. The teachers were instructed to complete the questionnaire and return it as they left the faculty meeting. Teachers absent from the meeting were given a copy of the survey the following day.

Out of a total faculty and staff of 114, 109 surveys were given out and were returned. One teacher was absent because of illness and could not be reached. The four administrators did not participate in the survey.

A study of the total response shown in the sample survey indicate the following conclusions:

1. The faculty clearly feels that class attendance is a problem here.

2. Students absence from class definitely affects the quality of instruction taking place.

3. The faculty almost unanimously would support an attendance policy limiting the number of days that a student could be absent from class and still receive credit for the class.

4. The majority of the teachers spend at least 1 hour to 3 hours each week helping students catch up on class work missed because of absence. A clear majority of the faculty spends more than an hour a week with make-up type work.

5. The faculty would prefer as first choice a policy based on 5 days per nine weeks. Their second choice would be a policy based on 10 days per semester.

Included as the last section of this survey are direct quotes from the remarks made by the faculty in the comments section of the questionnaire. Of the 109 surveys returned, 46 of them were with comments. All of the comments have been included.

RESULTS OF SURVEY
ALBEMARLE HIGH SCHOOL

Appendix H Continued

April 12, 1976

TO: Faculty and Staff

FROM: Administration

SUBJECT: Survey of Faculty Concerning Attendance

The Albemarle High School administration is working on possible student attendance policies for the 1976-77 school year. In our presentation to the Superintendent and School Board, an accurate report of the faculty's position on attendance policy is absolutely necessary.

Indicate your position checking the response:

Yes	No		
107	2	1.	Do you feel that class attendance is a problem here at Albemarle High School?
94	9	2.	Does absence from class as it exists here significantly affect the quality of your teaching?
NR 6			
108	1	3.	Are you in favor of an attendance policy that limits the number of days that a student can be absent from your class and still receive credit for the class?

4. How much time do you spend during an average week helping students, who have been absent, make up work?

16	Less than one hour
36	More than one hour but less than two
25	More than two hours but less than three
12	More than three hours but less than four
9	More than four hours per week No Response - 11
_____	Indicate your estimate _____

5. If a limit for the number of days absent from class is adopted, which of the following approaches do you feel would be most effective in improving class attendance and most fair and helpful to the students:

57	5 days per nine weeks
16	7 days per nine weeks
26	10 days per semester
8	20 days per school year
2	None of the above
_____	If none of the above, indicate your suggestion

_____

COMMENTS: _____

_____

_____

_____

Appendix H Continued

TEACHER COMMENTS CONCERNING ATTENDANCE

As a Physical Education teacher, I feel that steady attendance is imperative!

All days missed past the limit checked above would have to have a doctor's excuse.

Designating the number of absences per 9 weeks for students I'm certain would cut down on the number of skips and people in the halls.

Kids with excused absences should not be given equal grades to those who are present everyday.

Something like this is needed to get students to decide what they want to do and make them responsible for their actions.

Due to a lack of no attendance policy, I can confront at least 10 persons first period who do not report to class on time or just don't attend. Many students just hang around the halls.

People in the hall--where do they belong--full class loads for all students or out of school building.

Keep people out of hall--they should be assigned a room and should be there.

People in the hall is a problem. Fourth period teaching in the breezeway is impossible.

Regarding #2 and #4--I teach an academic class so I am not bothered too much by chronic absenteesim. However, I do feel it is a problem!

With more than 5 days absence per 9 weeks, a student should be required to bring a doctor's excuse. The policy should be made as clear and simple as possible--and then strictly enforced.

Lack of attendance is a big problem and I feel very strongly that we need a definite policy about this and to stick to it.

I feel that all exceptions should be made clear to teachers and students and that students taken out by parents for family trips should not be excused.

An attendance policy is desperately needed in this building--it is unbelievable that a student can miss 70 - 80 days and still receive credit for the class.

I feel that this is one of the greatest frustrations in teaching here. I am having to constantly review material and give special help to students because many feel they need to take "holidays" more frequently than they need to attend class. This wastes my time and other students' time. Today I had to postpone a class activity because only 1/2 the class showed and we couldn't do it!

I'd be in favor of this only if the list of exceptions and reasons are posted for view by teachers and students.

I am uncertain about the policy of dropping the grade to 74 after five days absence. I hope there will be more discussion of this.

This is an excellent plan and I hope we can implement it!

A firm attendance policy is needed, I believe. I think this will help our attendance problem.

I would only be in favor of this policy if the review board made public, for students as well as teachers, a list of exceptions. I also think that exceptions should be kept to a minimum. Otherwise, the policy would lose its effectiveness.

Family vacations should NOT be excepted from this policy.

I feel that students who leave on trips should be counted absent. It is important that they accept responsibility of attendance and because they go on a trip to Florida it is still the same as laying out. School trips should be excused but parents' trips should not be excused. This will discourage excessive absences.

Family vacations should be unexcused. These should count toward the 5 days per nine weeks. Field trips should be excused and not included in the five days. I feel the only illness which should be considered for appeal are extended ones in which the student is hospitalized and/or under a doctor's care. Five scattered absences for a headache, stomach ache, etc., should not be grounds for appeal.

This policy is overdue. I hope to see it strictly enforced, particularly against all unnecessary absences, including those for family vacations.

Many students who ask not to have much homework are the very students who are not in class for classwork.

I would like to see a crackdown on various excuses like going hunting, having to drive another family member somewhere, going to the ACC Tournament, etc.

This policy has been needed for a long time. I would like to see family vacations included.

I have taught at a school with a strict attendance policy and was quite impressed with how well it worked. This year, especially, attendance has been quite a problem. I would be 100% behind a strict policy!

The number of sports' participants absent from class make testing, etc. very difficult. Will sports ever be able to be part of after-school activities only (for the most part)? Emphasis should be on <u>academic</u> activities!

Ten days per year unless a long illness with attendance medically impossible.

Appendix H Continued

A good deal of the work for my class must be done in class due to use of tools and equipment. If a student is absent, then comes during a study hall to make up work, that takes my time away from students who have not been absent from class. It's not fair to those who regularly attend class.

People in hall is major problem - where do they belong?

Can anything be done about athletes missing class? This spring my 6th period class is very difficult to teach!! I spend most of my class time doing make-up work.

I would like to see a policy that if they missed more than 10 days a semester they would fail for that semester.

I would support 100% an absence policy - we need one!

We don't have any policy now, so lets get something going.

It's about time!

I strongly urge some type of implementation!!!

Good idea and needed!

There is a definite need for this.

I am glad to see us take a stand on this. Let's make it work for God's sake. Let's attack tardy policy next.

Great idea!!

I feel a student absent a great number of days should not receive the same credit as one here all the days.

Class policy on attendance has been established in my class.

Without doctor's signature, no more than the 10 days.

I do not have as many problems as my colleagues, but feel something should be done.

Appendix I

COUNTY OF ALBEMARLE

Department of Education
ROOM 310. COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING
CHARLOTTESVILLE. VIRGINIA 22901

OFFICE OF
SUPERINTENDENT

Committee to Consider an Attendance Policy for
the Albemarle County School System

Mr. John N. Anderson - Assistant Principal at Albemarle High School

Mr. James B. Helvin - Principal at Jack Jouett Junior High School

Mr. George T. Lyons
Cochran's Mill - Rio Road
Charlottesville, Va. 22901
Phone: 295-5509 (Home)

Mr. Clarence S. McClure - Division Superintendent

Mrs. Lorraine Montgomery
32 Spring Court
Charlottesville, Va. 22901
Phone: 973-7379 (Home) 295-0822 (Business)

Mr. Scott Montgomery - Student at Albemarle High School

Mr. Eugene E. Norton - Teacher at Albemarle High School

Mrs. Elizabeth P. Rosenblum - School Board Member

Mr. John C. Sessoms - Assistant Principal at Albemarle High School

Mrs. Barbara S. Smith - Teacher at Jack Jouett Junior High School

Mr. Carl M. VanFossen - School Board Member

Mr. David Winstead - Central Governing Board Student at
Albemarle High School

Appendix J

J

Parent Survey

On April 20, 1976, the following letter was sent to 244 parents of Albemar High School students. The parents selected to receive the letter were those t received March's attendance letter.

A total of 25 responses were received. The results are indicated below.

In Favor of Policy	Not in Favor
20	5

The indication of the above results, even though the return was small, is that a clear majority of parents in Albemarle County favor a firm policy on attendance. Most parents voting favorably did indicate the feeling that the policy should allow for extenuating circumstances such as long term illness.

Starting in January of this year, a letter has been printed out at the end of each month by the computer at the Vo-Tech School for all students having 20% or greater absence during a given month.

A telephone survey resulted in increasing the total responses to 247. Parents supported the policy 190 to 57.

Appendix J Continued

ALBEMARLE HIGH SCHOOL
1380 Hydraulic Road
Charlottesville, Virginia

April 20, 1976

Dear Parent:

First of all, we would like to express our appreciation to you for your support this school year and in years past. Albemarle High School is working towards solving the problems that we have, and we are thinking about initiating a policy on attendance, which is one of the problems that causes us most concern.

We are hoping to have a policy that would limit the number of days a student can miss from a class and still receive credit for that class. Twenty (20) days is the number that we have in mind at this time.

School systems that have adopted a firm policy on attendance have reported it to be successful in reducing absences from school and from classes.

Please indicate whether or not you would be in favor of the school adopting such a policy and return your answer to your son's/daughter's grade level principal or call him at 973-5351 between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. on or before May 10, 1976.

Appreciation is expressed in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Donn A. Goodwin

Donn A. Goodwin, Grade 10

John C. Sessoms

John C. Sessoms, Grade 11

John N Anderson

John N. Anderson, Grade 12

zhm

_____ I am in favor of adopting a policy which limits absences to 20 days per year.

_____ I am not in favor of such a policy.

Appendix k

K

ALBEMARLE HIGH SCHOOL

STUDENT HANDBOOK

General Information,
Procedures, Rules, and Regulations

1976 — 1977

ference will be held if parents desire. If a student is absent two more class periods, a failing grade will be assigned. When six absences have occurred, the Review Committee will meet to decide the applicability of absences toward the limit of six. The assistant principal will notify in writing the student, his parents, and the teacher of the decision.

IV. A student may appeal loss of credit in a class to the Review Committee. A student facing loss of credit in one or more classes may request a meeting with the Review Committee by contacting his grade level assistant principal. The meeting will be scheduled the following day at 3:45 P.M. or as soon as convenient to all parties. At the meeting, the student and his parents may present (and in fact are encouraged to do so), all evidence supporting his claim of extenuating circumstances causing his absences. The student may appeal the decision of the Review Committee to the principal, to the superintendent, and then to the School Board.

V. Students are expected to make up all work missed because of absences within 5 days of their return. It is the student's responsibility to ask the teacher about work missed. Work not made up will be recorded as a zero grade. All students are required to submit notes to their homeroom teachers verifying their reasons for ab-

II. ATTENDANCE

1. All students are required to attend school every day. Progress in school and success in your daily learning activities depend on your presence in class.
2. **Homeroom** - Homeroom period will come at the end of first period class. Students should go directly to their first period class at 8:50.
3. **Tardiness** - If you arrive at school after the first period has started, go directly to your first period class. If you arrive at school after the end of the first period, check in at the main office. This applies to everyone including those riding buses.
4. **Attendance Regulations** -
   I. Any student absent from any class 6 class periods or more during a nine weeks grading period will receive a failing grade of 74 or, if his average is failing, the lowest average of the two will be recorded. On the 6th day, the policy will be enforced.
   II. An absence resulting from a school sponsored activity will not count in the total because scheduling needs will require one educational activity occasionally to displace another. Prearranged absences will be left up to the discretion of the principal and must be applied for at least two weeks in advance. All other absences will count toward the maximum of 6, including early dismissals.
   III. A student absent from any class 4 class periods during a nine week grading period will be warned in a conference with his assistant principal; a letter will be mailed to his parents, a phone call will be made to parents if possible, and a parental con-

VI. The acceptable reasons for absences from class are listed below:
   1. Illness of the student verified by parents. In cases of extended absence, the principal may rquire a doctor's note.
   2. Death in family.
   3. Doctor's appointments that cannot be scheduled after school. All appointments must be verified and a student is expected to return to school from early appointments if possible.
   4. Court cases as evidenced by the court summons.
   5. Prearranged absence with approval from the principal. Formal application for prearranged absences will have to be made by the parents.
   6. Home emergencies.

VII. A student on school grounds during school hours and not in class will be handled as a disciplinary as well as an attendance matter.

Appendix L

Albemarle High School

Monthly Percentage of Attendance

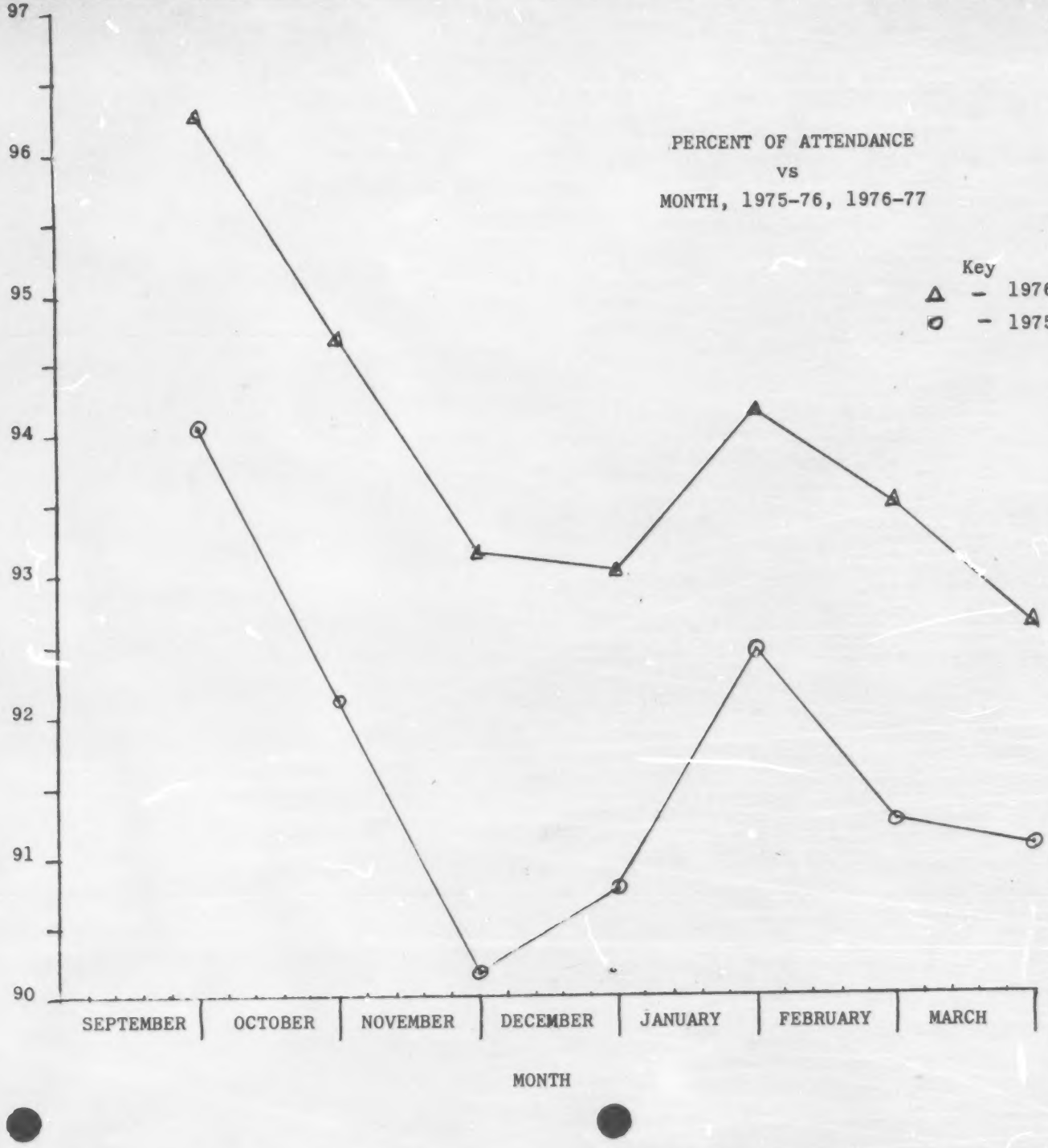
Attendance records for the 1975-76 and 1976-77 school years show the following percent of attendance for each month.

Month	Percent of Attendance	
	1976-77	1975-76
September	96.28	94.07
October	94.69	92.13
November	93.17	90.18
December	93.03	90.77
January	94.16	92.46
February	93.50	91.23
March	92.63	91.07
Total	93.92	91.70

Studying the graph indicates several conclusions:

1. Attendance for the 1976-77 school year is improved for each month.
2. Even though the attendance has improved for the 1976-77 school year, the pattern of declining percentage of attendance as the year progresses continues.
3. The decreasing percentage of attendance indicated still leaves room for improvement in attendance.
4. The improvement of attendance in January can be attributed to final exams.
5. Generally speaking, one can expect attendance to become progressively worse as each semester progresses.

Appendix 1 Continued



Appendix M

M

Attendance at Albemarle High School

The data used was obtained from the computer attendance records and was plotted on the following bar graph. All of the data used is as of March 31, 1977 with 135 days of school completed. The attendance of 2,154 students who were enrolled for the entire 135 days was used.

School attendance records indicate that average daily attendance is 93.954% for this school year. Assuming these figures will hold for the remainder of the year, the "average" student could be expected to miss 6.046% of the 180 day school year which equals approximately 11 days.

During approximately the same time last year, the average daily attendance was 91.783% indicating that the "average" student missed around 15 days for the year. Our attendance regulations this year have resulted in a clear-cut improvement in attendance.

However, a study of the data and graph shows 421 students have missed over the average of 11 days so far this year. Last year, the same study indicated 562 students had missed beyond the 15 day average at this same time of the year. The indication here is that there are still students that have needless absences from school.

Appendix M Continued

Data Table For Graph

Number of Students vs Number of Days Absent

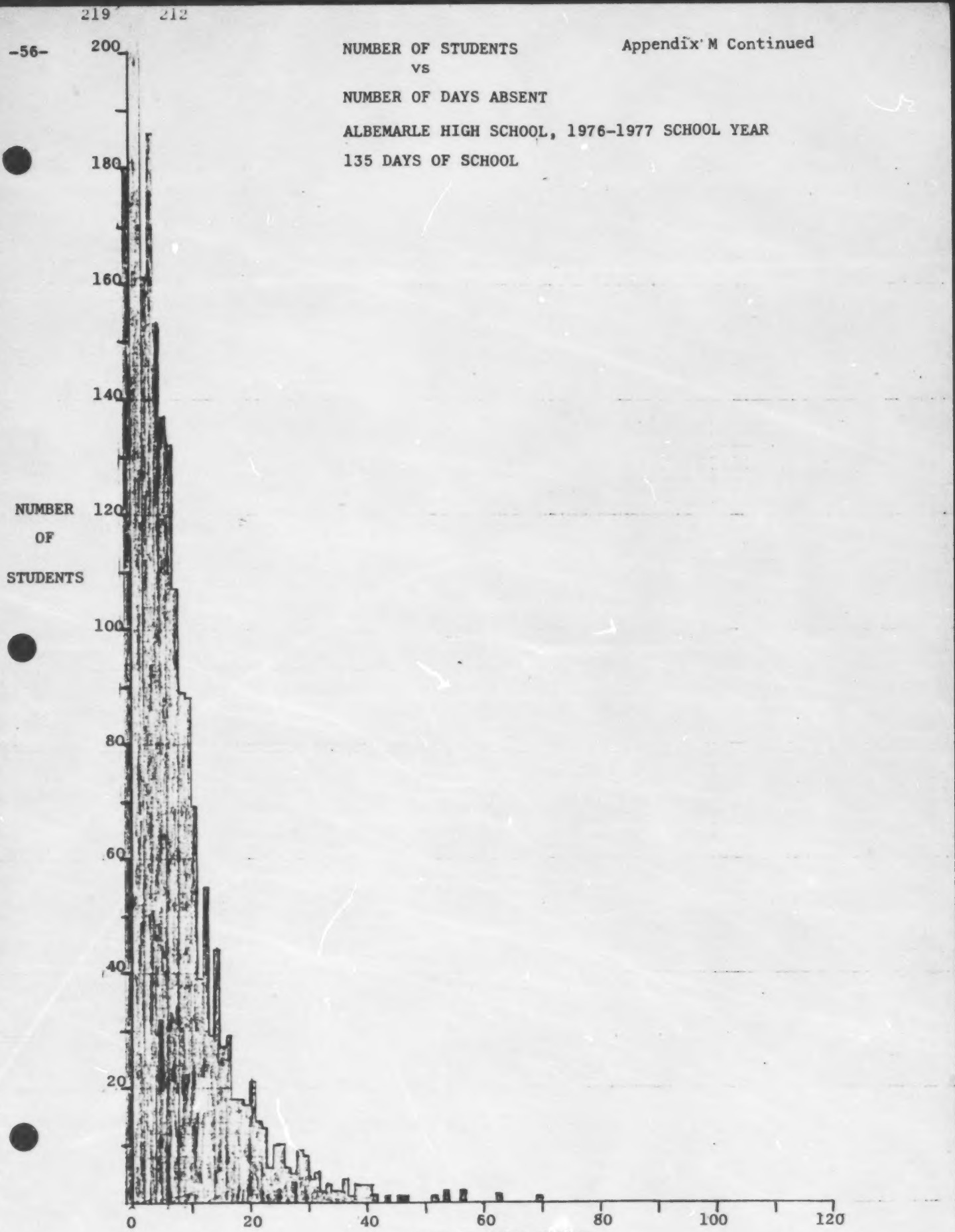
Number of Students	Number of Days Absent	Number of Students	Number of Days Absent
180	0	10	26
219	1	6	27
212	2	5	28
161	3	9	29
186	4	8	30
153	5	4	31
137	6	5	32
132	7	2	33
107	8	3	34
89	9	2	35
88	10	2	36
59	11	4	37
39	12	1	38
55	13	3	39
29	14	3	40
44	15	3	41
27	16	1	42
29	17	1	44
18	18	1	46
18	19	1	47
17	20	1	52
21	21	2	54
14	22	2	57
13	23	1	63
6	24	1	70
10	25		

Appendix M Continued

NUMBER OF STUDENTS
vs
NUMBER OF DAYS ABSENT

ALBEMARLE HIGH SCHOOL, 1976-1977 SCHOOL YEAR

135 DAYS OF SCHOOL



Appendix M Continued

ATTENDANCE AT ALBEMARLE HIGH SCHOOL

1975 - 1976

The data below was obtained from the computer attendance records of Albemarle High School for the period of September 2, 1975 through April 13, 1976 with 132 days of school completed.

School attendance records indicate that average daily attendance is 91.783% for this year. The "average" student, then, could be expected to miss 8.21% of the 180 day school year which equals approximately 15 days. Therefore, in terms of average attendance, most students would not be affected by a policy of up to a 20 day absence per year limit. However, there are many students who miss more than 20 days per year as can be seen in the table below.

Number of Students	Number of Days Absent	Number of Students	Number of Days Absent	Number of Students	Number of Days Absent
1	82	4	38	24	18
1	69	6	37	34	17
1	61	9	36	23	16
2	60	7	35	50	15
1	59	5	34	61	14
1	57	2	33	50	13
1	54	7	32	52	12
1	53	7	31	55	11
3	52	16	30	69	10
2	51	9	29	76	9
2	49	14	28	95	8
7	48	8	27	102	7
2	46	13	26	99	6
3	45	11	25	139	5
5	44	10	24	125	4
5	43	21	23	140	3
3	42	12	22	161	2
4	41	19	21	171	1
7	40	16	20	170	0
3	39	18	19		

Appendix N

N

Report on Dropout Absenteeism

1976-77

The data below was obtained from the computer attendance records. This data was computed through March 31, 1977, with 135 days of school completed.

The projected average absence for a student this year is around 6%. Of 108 dropouts, all but 6 have a rate of absence in excess of this 6% average. As with last year, poor attendance appears to be a contributing factor with students that drop out.

A comparison of this year's report with last year's report indicates several conclusions. First, and most important, the number of dropouts this year for approximately the same amount of time is 108. Last year the number was 115. Considering that our enrollment is just over 100 students greater this year, this decrease in the number of dropouts is significant. Our firm stand on attendance this year has not increased the number of students quitting school as was suggested last year. A close examination of the graph for this year and last year indicates that even the attendance of those students quitting school improved.

Appendix N Continued

The Absentee Record of 1976-77 Dropouts

Number of Dropouts	% Absent	Number of Dropouts	% Absent	Number of Dropouts	% Absent
3	0	4	21	2	43
1	1	3	23	4	45
1	2	2	24	2	47
1	6	7	25	1	51
3	9	5	26	3	54
3	10	1	27	2	57
4	11	3	28	1	58
1	12	1	29	2	60
2	13	1	30	1	64
5	14	2	31	2	70
3	15	4	33	1	71
6	16	3	34	1	80
4	17	1	35		
3	18	2	36		
1	19	2	40		
1	20	3	42		

NOTE: The second column reflects the percentage of time missed by dropouts during the time they were enrolled in school.

Appendix O

Grade Point Average and Attendance
1976-77 School Year

The relationship between student attendance and performance was again investigated this year. Only the first semester record of the junior class of 600 students was used because of the quantity of calculations involved.

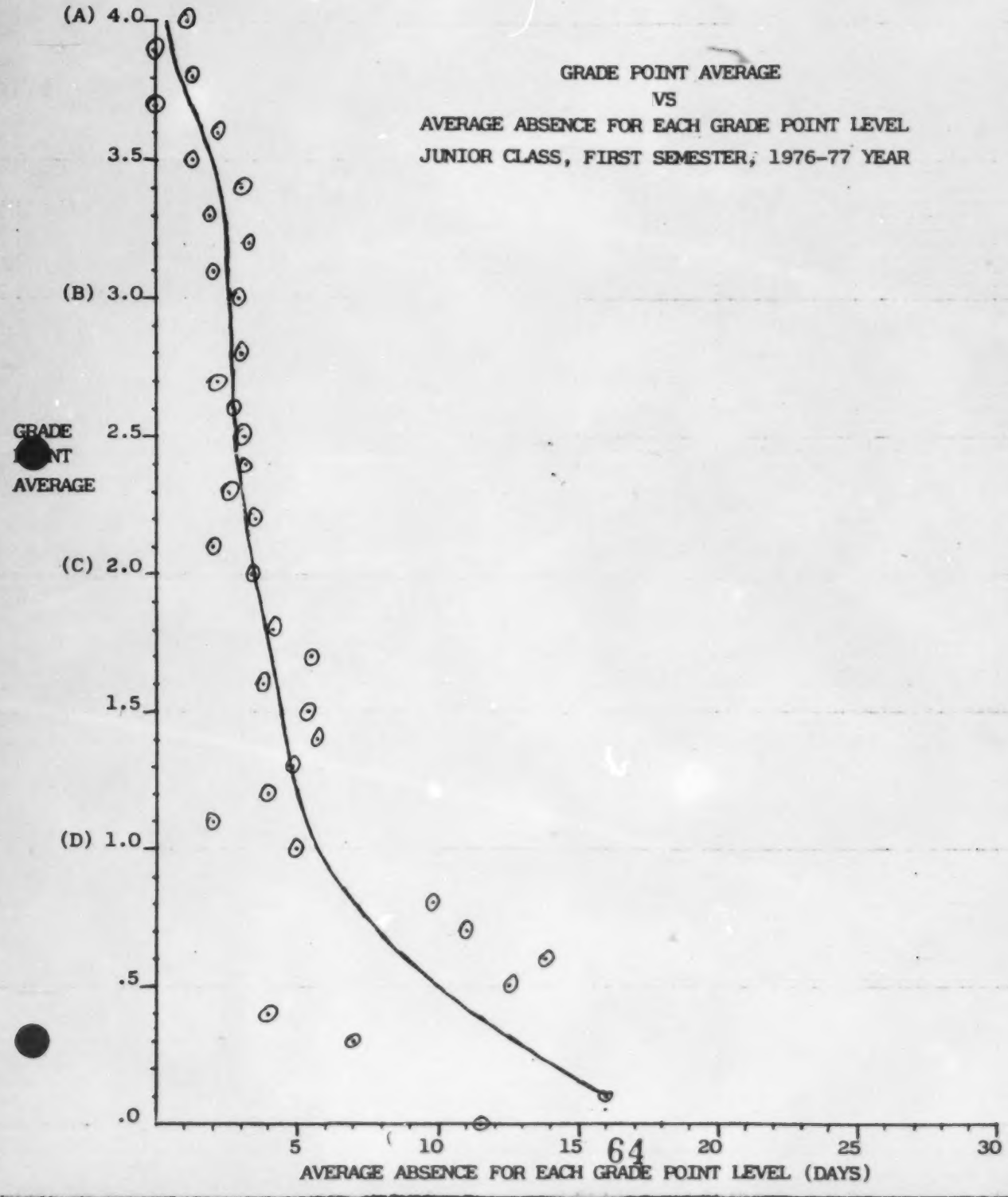
Each junior's first semester grades were converted to a single grade point average by assigning points to his semester letter grade for each subject and then finding the average. The grade point values assigned were: A-4; B-3; C-2; D-1; and F-0. After finding the grade point average for each junior, the average absence for each grade point level was computed. The results are indicated in the data table and graph. The points plotted do not fall along a smoothly sloping curve so a middle position is used for the curve.

As with last year's report, a study of the graph indicates that a relationship between attendance and grades does exist. The curve of the graph indicates that the average absence for grade point level 2.0 and below has decreased. Above grade point level 2.0, the average absence appears to be about the same as last year's. Although not as distinctly defined as last year because of improved attendance, the relationship between attendance and grades continue to show up, "as a student's absence increases his grade point average decreases."

Appendix O Continued

Grade Point Level	Average Absence (Days)	Grade Point Level	Average Absence (Days)	Grade Point Level	Average Absence (Days)	Grade Point Level	Average Absence (Days)
0	11.5	1.1	2	2.1	2	3.1	2.0
.1	16	1.2	4	2.2	3.5	3.2	3.3
.2	-	1.3	4.9	2.3	2.6	3.3	1.9
.3	7	1.4	5.7	2.4	3.2	3.4	3.0
.4	4	1.5	5.4	2.5	3.15	3.5	1.3
.5	12.5	1.6	3.8	2.6	2.72	3.6	2.2
.6	13.8	1.7	5.5	2.7	2.2	3.7	0
.7	11	1.8	4.2	2.8	3.0	3.8	1.28
.8	9.8	1.9	-	2.9	-	3.9	0
.9	-	2.0	3.4	3.0	2.9	4.0	1.1
1.0	5						

Appendix O Continued



Appendix P

Faculty Survey, Make-up Work

1976-77 School Year

A sample survey of the faculty was taken this year as a follow-up to the make-up work question on last year's survey. The survey was completed by one to three teachers from each department or a total of 25 teachers. This year 83.3% of those teachers surveyed indicated that between one hour and four hours per week were spent on make-up work. Last year's survey indicated that 74.4% of the faculty spent this much time on make-up work.

The conclusion here would have to be that the attendance policy this year has not decreased the amount of time spent on make-up work by each teacher this year.

Appendix P Continued

A sample survey of the faculty is being taken in order to obtain information concerning the following question:

How much time do you spend during an average week helping students, who have been absent, make up work?

1976-77	1975-76	School Year
0	16.3%	Less than one hour
58.3%	36.7%	More than one hour but less than two
25%	25.5%	More than two hours but less than three
0	12.2%	More than three hours but less than four
16.7%	9.2%	More than four hours per week
0	0	Indicate your estimate

Thank you,

John Sessoms

Results of Teachers Survey

In an effort to determine the position of the faculty on the attendance policy, each teacher was given a survey form which consisted of three questions and a space for comments.

In answer to the first question:

"Do you feel that class attendance is a problem at Albemarle High School?" Seventy-five teachers answered "Yes" and twelve indicated "No." Five teachers did not respond to the question.

In response to the second question:

"Has attendance improved in your classes this year?" Forty-three felt that it had improved, twenty-seven said it had not improved and nineteen made no comment.

When asked their opinion on the third question:

"Do you feel that we should continue to operate under this year's attendance regulations for the 1977-78 school year?" Sixty-seven said "Yes", seventeen said "No" and seven did not respond to the question.

When asked their opinion on the number of unexcused absences a student should be allowed each nine-week grading period, thirty-two teachers felt that six days was the appropriate number, nine teachers felt that we should use five days, twelve teachers indicated four days, thirteen teachers listed three days and five indicated two days. Three teachers thought one day was sufficient and four teachers said that students should not be allowed any days.

The comments made by teachers concerning the attendance policy are listed below.

1. Limit the number of excused absences except for illness and/or death in family.
2. Can't something be done about the same students missing the same classes for sports. (Girls' tennis players missed three classes this week, plus physics trip Tuesday and government trip Thursday.) It is impossible to individually tutor all the work missed.
3. Excuses should be examined thoroughly. An excessive number of sickness excuses should be investigated thoroughly.
4. Should not be able to accumulate six unexcused absences before failing.
5. Teachers should be notified, regardless, after six absences.
6. Notes for absences should be checked very, very carefully.
7. Students should have a central reporting place for 4+ tardies with a designated person(s) in charge - not a teacher responsibility.

Appendix P Continued

8. It seems that only one-third of my 6+ absentees are ever penalized or even questioned for that matter. Occasionally, extenuating circumstances aren't dealt with sympathetically. These two problems taken together make the students, as well as myself, feel that the "system" is unfair.

9. No unexcused pre-arranged absence would be excused. Students now feel they have six so use or take six. Limit six excused absences but no unexcused.

10. There should be some means of controlling the students who decide just to skip your class one day. I have had students who I know have skipped my class but whose absences don't go over six times. I think we should revive the homeroom teacher giving excuses for absences for each teacher to sign. However, it should be handled in a way to prevent students from ripping off excuses and forging excuses.

11. Excused absences beyond five should count against a student's grade particularly in classes such as physical education where activity cannot be made up. Under our present physical education system if a student misses five days out of a fifteen-day activity unit, it is really difficult to fairly evaluate them for this unit. A new system of athletic team absences needs to be devised. The day of a game or match is not enough notice for teacher attendance reporting.

12. Students should have a note for every absence. If he doesn't, it's unexcused and should be penalized.

13. When four absences are accumulated and excuses are inspected, the student should be suspended if he has even one absence not excused.

14. Teacher should have more feedback on whats going on about students who are absent. I, personally, have had kids (many) absent more than the six and really don't know (at grading time, etc.) what to do about it without going to a great deal of trouble to find out. I dislike this policy. "If you don't hear from us...etc." The paper work involved with keeping attendance is too much, for example, I have a homeroom - (1) I take roll in my roll book, (2) I copy names on attendance sheet and (3) Then pull cards for attendance for computer - plus tardies.

15. A closer check on the present system - perhaps more responsible people to help - closer screnning of excuses given - more communication between those directly responsible and teachers, counselors, etc. The present policy has improved the attendance percentage wise.

16. Don't excuse student absences when they are out on school days vacationing with their parents.

17. I feel that there should be a limit placed on the number of days that can be excused or unexcused. It shouldn't make any difference whether you have a note from your parents or not. Students are taking advantage of the fact that all they need is a note from their parents to be considered "excused" - therefore, they miss more than the six days, sick or not, and are not penalized.

Appendix P Continued

18. More secretarial help for assistant principals.

19. More definite instructions on reporting students who are absent but not listed on absentee list. I feel there are many inconsistencies as to the procedure to follow. Also need to know about students likely to fail because of attendance before very end of nine-weeks. I might be able to help encourage their attendance if I knew they were really getting close to six unexcused absences.

20. More careful survey of hall traffic and punishment for students without proper credentials.

21. There should be closer watch over excused vs. unexcused absences. Assistant principals are overburdened. Work should be done by committee of teachers or by someone (more than one) hired to do the job, under the supervision of the assistant principals.

22. If at all possible, let teachers know which students should fail due to excessive absences, in time to record this on the grade sheet.

23. Because of the large numbers of students involved, the record keeping is difficult. Perhaps another person should help in keeping records. Also, the criteria for excused absences need to be set forth clearly and applied consistently.

24. Enforce rules you have.

25. I have seen kids run up more than six absences without their parents being contacted. Home contact is a must if this policy is to be effective.

26. I feel work, such as tests, should be graded as "F" as opposed to allowing students to make it up (in the case of unexcused absences).

27. Excuses should have to be in by student the day following their return to school. This would eliminate a parent sending in all at once. Excuses should be taken to each teacher for absence. Another procedure should be used for field trip absences, athletics, etc.

28. A closer check should be made on chronic absentees and their "excuses." Consistent enforcement is a must. All should be considered equally. Teachers should get a copy of the attendance work so they will know throughout the nine weeks where a student who may be in trouble stands. Hire a secretary to help the assistant principals with the paper work to free them for other matters.

29. I believe even with a policy of this type, blue and white passes should be used. If a student misses more than one unexcused a nine weeks (that's four a year) then they should fail. This policy is too lenient and allows them to skip five times and be excused as many as necessary in one nine weeks. The blue and white passes are necessary for if a student is on the absentee. We presently assume it is okay when he is not in class and it may be an unexcused.

30. The present policy gives kids a license to cut. I would recommend the following changes: (1) No work missed during an un-

excused absence can be made up. (2) Someone has got to check on each absence from each class. This is a hugh amount of work, but we have got to do it. I would be willing to check up on my own absentees if I could do it without running all over the building asking different people for information.

31. Make policy more stringent by limiting the types of excuses granted. Students should not be excused to take vacation trips and the like. Excuses should be granted for illness (with doctor's excuse for extended illness) death in the family, emergencies (explained in detail) and certain types of pressing business which can't be done at other times.

32. Severely curtail the number of unexcused absences. The hugh majority of absences ought to fall into the category of excused absences. Student opinion seems to be that skipping class can still be done easily.

33. Unfortunately, in my academic classes, some of my students see the policy as a "gift" of four cuts. (Since their parents aren't notified until the fifth absence.) If anything, my attendance is worse this year. I'd like to see the number of unexcused absences cut to zero - but!!

34. Students at Charlottesville do not have to take exams if they haven't missed a class except for a school function. If a student is sick and misses class, then he takes the exam. It is a great incentive to come to class and I believe it works very well and that we might initiate it. I resent students who go out of town with their parents, are sick a few days and have unexcused absences to class a couple of days, have maybe eight total absences and are not punished, since five of them maybe excused.

35. The bookkeeping must be a tremendous problem. Maybe teachers could help during a period instead of having a study hall. Students are not being followed up on quickly enough. More administrative help is needed. Teachers are not being informed or we are not working consistently on problems - maybe a master list of all failures every nine weeks.

36. There are far too many absences related to school functions - field trips, athletic events, etc. The present policy probably works well with low-level students who are constant truants. It doesn't do much about students whose parents take them to Florida for a week or more.

37. Better way of notifying individual instructors of absentees - if excused.

38. It would be helpful if teachers were supplied lists of the number of unexcused absences per student. This would minimize the hassle at the end of the grading period.

39. Follow-up on those individuals absent six times should be prompter. Often teachers have no idea about the status of these students at the end of a nine weeks. (Pass or Fail?)

40. Additional help is required to keep the absences letters current and effective. At present many students cut over the limit and then receive letters. Each unexcused absence should be

zeroed for classwork rather than automatic failure for six absences.

41. Don't let up on what we are doing now. Let's work harder at making what we are doing work. We have too many students in the hallway between and during class time.

42. Get secretaries to help the assistant principals in their paperwork. Be very strict about enforcing this rule. Make it a habit to telephone home and check on some of the written excuses that are brought in.

43. Try to improve the method of notifying teachers and parents about grades and what they should be in relation to absences. Present system needs much refining. The letter sent home to parents needs to explain more about excused and unexcused absences - (Example:) Parents who send in excuses do not understand why the letter lists those dates when they are excused.

44. Adhere to it! I have had students with 15 - 20 absences who have not failed. The enforcement of the system is terribly inconsistent.

45. Need an aide to help with the attendance record keeping.

46. Another secretary who would help keep up with the attendance would enable the principals to strickly enforce the policy and increase the communication between teachers, parents, principals.

47. I think that excused absences should be investigated more thoroughly. At the time the faculty discussed the new attendance policy last spring, I assumed that a student would be required to attend a conference after six absences. Many of my academic students have abused this policy by having parents write letters for invalid reasons. Right now it seems as long as something in written form is in the file, it is approved. I don't feel this is right.

48. More careful checking on excuses - notes, phone calls, etc. Stricter enforcement of excuses, ie. too many people slip through with flimsy reasons for being absent.

49. Students should give notes to first period teachers. These notes would be used to determine whether absence was excused or unexcused by assistant principal. The first period teacher would separate these notes for the individual principals. Principals would have one secretary to collect these for each.

50. Do whatever is necessary to promote more efficient "processing." Too often, limitations of time and personnel result in a hurried examination of "complex" cases.

51. Stronger enforcement.

52. None of the above applies to the TMR class.

53. The problem with the attendance policy now is that a large group of students see five days per quarter as their right - a sort of vacation period. Generally speaking it is a good step in the right direction.

Appendix P Continued

54. This attendance policy would be fine if it were carried out fairly (i.e. the same for everyone). As it stands now, the attendance policy appears to be too much for the principals to handle (numbers involved), and is therefore not applied equitably because so many students are missed or teachers don't bring it to the attention of the principals.

55. Try to get warning letters out quickly. Apparently some have slipped by. Good job considering you only have one full-time clerk.

56. Students on grounds not attending class: (1) Warn, (2) One day suspension and (3) Each additional - three day suspension.

57. Do more about people who skip all day or one period.

58. Try to implement more positive rewards for attendance rather than emphasizing the negative rewards for non-attendance.

59. It seems as though a student should not pass a nine week regardless of excuse if he misses more than one-fourth of the time. Therefore, assign ten absences for each nine weeks and strict failure if he misses more than ten regardless of excuse. No exceptions.

60. The number is not crucial. Consistent enforcement is needed. Teachers need to be notified whether absences are excused or unexcused.

61. Hire more administrative personnel to keep up with the enforcement. Make penalties stick. Decrease number of acceptable "free days."

62. More personnel needed to handle backlog of cases. Kids know you're swamped and take advantage of that fact. Kids feel we are giving them five free skips and some feel they are entitled to that. I strongly oppose recent tardy policy. I was not consulted. I resent having to give up my SAP period to babysit them. Insist on getting their excuses sooner would alleviate mass confusion right before grades are due.

63. Need more administrative help and need reliable runners.

64. Send them home when they are out seven days. The present policy takes up too much time.

65. Often we are not notified when a student has an excess of unexcused absences until the end of nine weeks. There has been some difficulty in parents being notified. Need more accurate record keeping.

66. Perhaps hire additional personnel to aid the assistant principals in the paper work involved so a backlog is not created.

67. Hire additional personnel to handle paper work to relieve assistant principals.

68. Absences should be either excused or unexcused. I have many students cutting, therefore, a need for a note to pass with the student from class to class on the day of return. Those that leave early must have a note from Ms. Brite to show teacher on day of return to cut down cuts. More personnel to administer policy.

69. Closer attention paid to skipping part of days.

70. Spot checking absentees daily makes it easier to determine if an absence is excused or unexcused. Have a penalty for skipping class or allow teacher to handle such problem. As long as any excuse is accepted, what difference does it make?

71. Have teachers informed immediately when six absences are reached rather than us go to office to find out. There is no way for us to know if he or she were excused that or those days.

72. I feel that the policy is very good but the ability to follow up needs improving. Students who miss the days should be taken care of sooner.

73. Is there any way we can control the excessive number of absences of people who drop in and out of school? Absences due to prolonged illness are understandable. What about frequent excused absences such as "not feeling well," etc.? Must athletic schedules for spring be so concentrated? (Tennis players)

74. When possible, check on excuses sent by chronic absentees to see if they are legitimate. Just because an excuse is turned in does not, to me, excuse a student anymore than some who had legitimate reasons but forgot their excuses.

75. Hire another assistant principal so the present system, which is good, can be made more efficient.

76. Some way must or should be found to discourage the fact that some students take their five days / nine weeks vacation. I don't know how to get around this. I feel the policy has worked as well as any could — It has definitely improved overall school attendance.

77. Stating a fixed number of unexcused absences seems to convey that any number up to that number is okay. Perhaps some sort of punishment for cutting class once, twice, or whatever, when a student is caught. Also, excuses should be brought by a specified time, not at the end of the nine weeks.

78. Stagger sport events so that the same students are not continually absent from same classes. More stringent enforcement of attendance rules.

79. Notify teachers if students have failed due to six legitimate absences. This has really not been done this year. Student sports events could be regulated so students would not miss two classes in one week.

Appendix Q

The Administrative Evaluation of the 1976-77
Attendance Regulations

Since the beginning of the school year, the three assistant principals have worked closely with the implementation and administration of the new attendance regulations. Our observations are as follows:

1. Parent support has been very strong. Conservatively speaking, the assistant principals are in contact concerning the attendance regulations with approximately 15 parents each school day by telephone, written or personal response. Out of these many direct contacts, only four of them over the whole school year have expressed extreme negative feelings against the new regulations. Initially parent response to the attendance letter mailed was apprehensive. However, once discussing the matter with an assistant principal and their questions were answered, they expressed a feeling of appreciation for the school's effort in combating truancy.

2. The attendance letter currently being used needs to be reworded to clarify the regulation and to reduce the need for assistant principals to give so many personal explanations.

3. Since the adoption of these regulations have placed a greater burden on the assistant principals requiring them to spend inordinate amounts of time on its administration, additional clerical help is necessary to continue its operation efficiently and effectively.

4. The 1976-77 attendance regulations state a six day limit on unexcused absence. Because the regulation deals primarily with unexcused questionable absence, the administration recommends that the limit be reduced to five.

5. Closer supervision of teachers reporting of absence needs to be undertaken. The administration feels that this could be done with additional clerical help. Presently, the assistant principals spend a great deal of their time checking student attendance. This could be done by properly trained secretaries, then releasing some of the assistant principals' time for more teacher supervision.

6. It is recommended that the committee which worked on this plan last year be reactivated to review the policy and make suggestions for improvements.

7. Overall we feel that discipline as well as attendance has improved at Albemarle High School this year. The total number of suspensions through April this year compared to last year seems to confirm this. Last year through April there were 250 suspensions. This year there have been 187.

In conclusion, the administration notes the overall improvement in attendance this year. Although the 1976-77 attendance regulations and procedures can be improved, the recommendation is that we continue to operate under these regulations.

R

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance Regulations

I. Any student absent from any class 5 class periods or more during a nine week grading period without acceptable reasons will receive a failing grade of 74 or, if his average is failing, the lowest average of the two will be recorded. On the 5th day of absence the policy will be enforced.

II. The acceptable reasons for absence from class are listed below:

1. Illness of the student verified by parents. Absences beyond 5 days due to illness in any nine-week reporting period must be verified by a doctor to be counted as excused absences. If school officials have direct knowledge about a student's condition, this requirement may be waived.
2. Doctor's appointments that cannot be scheduled after school. All appointments must be verified and a student is expected to return to school from early appointments, if possible.
3. Death in family
4. Court cases as evidenced by the court summons.
5. Prearranged absence with approval from the principal. Formal application for prearranged absences will have to be made by the parents.
6. Home emergencies.
7. Extenuating circumstances which are considered and approved by the school administration.

All students are required to submit notes to their homeroom teachers verifying their reasons for absences on the first day back in school. Late notes must be submitted within 5 days or the absence will definitely be counted as unexcused. These notes will be filed away for future references.
These specific situations are not considered acceptable reasons for being excused absent from class or school:

Absence because of:
A. car trouble
B. personal business
C. missing the bus
D. oversleeping
E. Needed at home, unless an emergency
F. (going to) working on a job

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may appeal the decision to the principal, to the superintendent and to the School Board.

VII. A student on school grounds during school hours and not in class will be handled as a disciplinary as well as an attendance matter.

VIII. Absences required because a student is suspended will not count in the total used in determining a penalty for absences; however, if the student remains out of school for more days than are specified as suspension days, these absences will count.